

# Still Learning Lessons About Tools and Their Uses



By AMEC(AW) Craig Warnick

Anyone who has served in the Navy for at least two years remembers the trusty old rate-training manual titled “Tools and Their Uses.” I finished this requirement some years ago and usually pride myself on being able to retain what I read. However, based on the happenings in maintenance control one evening, maybe it is time for a little refresher training.

Our AMEs had been discussing ways to get more cooling air to the electronic components in the bird-cage area (the aft equipment bay) in one of our EA-6Bs. To do so, they decided to change the sock on the aft water separator.

Approximately 15 minutes later, one of our AMEs called me in maintenance and said, “Chief, you have to see this.” The aft water separator had collapsed and wasn’t allowing any cooling air to reach the aft power supply. I was elated because they just had discovered why we were frying aft power supplies in this jet.

Being an inquisitive chief, I told him to bring the part down to maintenance for further analysis. He did, and I quickly discovered the part was buck-

led so badly the AMEs could not take it apart. But I thought I could disassemble it because, after all, I am a chief. I’m the one who daily preaches “Tools and Their Uses” at the maintenance meeting, on the hangar bay, and in all the shops.

The only tool within reach was my cheap Leatherman tool, which had a screwdriver tip on the end of a blade. I picked up this tool in front of god (our CO, in this case) and country (an audience of shipmates) and promptly placed it on one of the mounting screws, pushing down with a little force. I assumed the Leatherman had a locking blade like the one I have at home. I was wrong!

Imagine my surprise, and pain, a few seconds later when the blade folded and buried itself deeply into my right index finger. Blood began spurting everywhere, and I quickly grabbed a canopy wipe to cover my finger, applying direct pressure to stop the flow. Slightly embarrassed, I told everyone it was “just a flesh wound.”

Six stitches later with my pride severely wounded, I returned to maintenance control. I stopped to think about how stupid my decision had been to use that tool and to do it in front of everyone.

The moral of the story is to practice what you preach and to think before doing any task. Complacency knows no rank...even an old maintenance-control chief can fall prey.



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